



KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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RON A. SKILLERN NAMED 2017 KENTUCKY TEACHER OF THE YEAR

(FRANKFORT, Ky.) – A 30-year veteran teacher at Bowling Green High School, Ron A. Skillern, is the 2017 Kentucky Teacher of the Year.

Valvoline, Inc.™ and the Kentucky Department of Education made the announcement today at a ceremony held at the Capitol Rotunda in Frankfort. Governor Matt Bevin; Education and Workforce Development Cabinet Deputy Secretary Brad Montell; Commissioner of Education Stephen L. Pruitt; and Sam Mitchell, chief executive officer of Valvoline, were on hand to make the presentation.

Kellie Jones, a 4th-grade science teacher at Taylor County Elementary, is the 2017 Elementary School Teacher of the Year. Sarah Mills, a 7th-grade science teacher at Eastside Middle School in Bullitt County, is the 2017 Middle School Teacher of the Year.

The three joined 21 other teachers from across the state honored with 2017 Valvoline Inc. Teacher Achievement Awards.

“Teachers are our most important asset and these teachers represent the best in the state,” said Kentucky Commissioner of Education Stephen L. Pruitt. “Teachers are the ones who stand between I can and I can’t, between knowledge and ignorance and between impossible and possible. Each day in the classroom, Kentucky’s teachers prove that students can reach the high levels of achievement that will prepare them for success in college, careers and life.”

In a statement Education Secretary Hal Heiner said “the 24 teachers recognized this year truly epitomize the finest educators in Kentucky because they were nominated by their peers, students, parents and administrators, and they go through a rigorous process to be named to this elite group of professionals.”

“Teachers not only impact the classroom, they influence every workplace in our state,” Heiner said. “Thank you to all our teachers who dedicate themselves each day to challenging their students and helping them reach their full potential.”

Jones and Mills received \$3,000 each and a customized, art-glass vase from Valvoline Inc., while Skillern received \$10,000 and a commemorative crystal-glass bowl. In addition, the Kentucky Department of Education will

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provide a sabbatical or suitable alternative for Skillern, who also will represent the state in the 2017 National Teacher of the Year competition. The remaining 21 winners each received \$500 cash awards. All 24 teachers received framed certificates and were recognized at a luncheon following the ceremony.

“I’m pleased to honor and recognize the 24 Valvoline Teacher Achievement Award winners and the Kentucky Teachers of the Year. Teachers play a critical role in helping to both shape and inspire a child’s desire for learning,” said Sam Mitchell, chief executive officer of Valvoline, Inc.

Valvoline and the Kentucky Department of Education co-sponsor the Kentucky Teacher Achievement Awards. Applications for the program were distributed across the state, and the first tier of the selection process was completed in August, with 24 teachers selected as 2017 Valvoline Inc. Teacher Achievement Award winners.

Nine top scorers – each from the elementary, middle and high school levels – were selected, and teams of educators visited their classrooms to view them at work and to conduct personal interviews. From those nine, three were selected as 2017 Kentucky Teachers of the Year. The selection of the overall Kentucky Teacher of the Year was based on the compilation of scores from all phases of the judging.

The Kentucky Teacher Awards program combines the best elements of what was formerly known as the Ashland Teacher Achievement Awards. Valvoline separated from Ashland to become a publicly traded company headquartered in Lexington, Ky., and is now sponsoring the Teacher Achievement Awards and the Kentucky Teacher of the Year programs. This marks the 16th year the Kentucky Department of Education and Ashland/Valvoline have partnered to honor Kentucky educators. Since 1988, approximately \$776,500 has been awarded to 524 teachers in grades K to 12.

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About Valvoline

Valvoline Inc. is a leading worldwide producer and distributor of premium-branded automotive, commercial and industrial lubricants, and automotive chemicals. In 2016, it ranks as the #2 quick-lube chain by number of stores and #3 passenger car motor oil in the DIY market by volume brand in the United States. The brand operates and franchises approximately 1,050 Valvoline Instant Oil ChangeSM centers in the United States. It also markets Valvoline lubricants and automotive chemicals; MaxLifeTM lubricants created for higher-mileage engines, SynPowerTM synthetic motor oil; and ZerexTM antifreeze. (NOTE: TMTrademark, Valvoline or its subsidiaries, registered in various countries. SM Service mark, Valvoline or its subsidiaries, registered in various countries.)

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TEACHER OF THE YEAR BIOGRAPHIES

Ronald A. Skillern, 2017 Kentucky High School Teacher of the Year and 2017 Kentucky Teacher of the Year Bowling Green High School, Bowling Green Independent Schools

Thirty-year teaching veteran Ronald A. Skillern has taught social studies at Bowling Green High School for 19 years. Skillern earned a bachelor's degree and Rank I certification at Western Kentucky University and a master's degree at Vanderbilt. He has designed/taught an intensive course for verbally and mathematically precocious youth at WKU's Center for Gifted Studies since 1992. As a center volunteer, Skillern secures scholarships for academically deserving but underprivileged students. He recently helped obtain a professional-development grant from the Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts. Skillern participates in The College Board Advanced Placement Program and is a member of the Kentucky Association of Professional Educators.

Kellie Jones, 2017 Elementary School Teacher of the Year Taylor County Elementary School

Kellie Jones has spent her entire 24-year career as an educator teaching 4th-grade students at Taylor County Elementary School. Jones earned bachelor's and master's degrees at Campbellsville University and has achieved Rank I certification. She recently presented at the Taylor County Personalized Learning Summit; the University of Louisville Race to the Top Communities of Practice Learning Forum; and at four Taylor County School District Personalized Learning site visits to teachers from other states. Jones further serves her community through a range of betterment initiatives and is a member of the Kentucky Science Teachers Association.

Sarah Mills, 2017 Middle School Teacher of the Year Eastside Middle School, Bullitt County Schools

A nine-year teaching veteran, Sarah Mills has taught science courses at Eastside Middle School throughout her career. Mills earned a bachelor's degree at Western Kentucky University and a master's degree at Spalding University. She also has achieved certification through the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. Mills is a school team leader; a classroom observation host/job-shadow mentor for high school/college students; a member of the school-based decision making council; and a host for the Bullitt County Public Schools Lab Classroom initiative. Her professional affiliations include the Bullitt County, Kentucky and National Education Associations; and the Kentucky and National Science Teachers Associations.

Valvoline Inc. Teacher Achievement Award Winners

- Carren M. Cook, Kenwood Elementary School, Jefferson County
- Kim Delaney, Longbranch Elementary School, Boone County
- Donna Cheryl Howard, Whitesville Elementary School, Daviess County
- Kellie Jones, Taylor County Elementary School, Taylor County
- Stephanie Williams Laird, Heath Elementary School, McCracken County
- Jennifer C. O'Daniel, Olive Hill Elementary School, Carter County
- Elizabeth Ramey, Elkhorn City Elementary School, Pike County
- Byron Wilson, Kentucky School for the Deaf (elementary school)
- Cayeann Cowan, Robertson County School, Robertson County
- Jennifer R. Farley, Farristown Middle School, Madison County
- Alexandra Howard, Barrett Traditional Middle School, Jefferson County
- Sarah Mills, Eastside Middle School, Bullitt County
- Candida Murphy, Robert D. Campbell Jr. High School, Clark County
- Chasity Shipley, Barren County Middle School, Barren County
- Brandi F. Smith, Madison Middle School, Madison County
- Emmanuel A. Stone, Shelby County West Middle School, Shelby County

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- Tammy Chapman, McCracken County High School, McCracken County
- Cathy Conley, Knott County Central High School, Knott County
- Cheryl Dicken, Campbellsville High School, Campbellsville Independent
- Kip Hottman, Fern Creek High School, Jefferson County
- Ashley Onkst, East Jessamine High School, Jessamine County
- Amanda Ratliff, Johnson Central High School, Johnson County
- Tricia Shelton, Boone County High School, Boone County
- Ron A. Skillern, Bowling Green High School, Bowling Green Independent

Bios for each of the 2017 Valvoline Inc. Teacher Achievement Award winners can be found [here](#).

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